**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY**

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**Subject: Turkey: Weekly update, 18-24 June 2022**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

* ***A lot of diplomatic traffic in Ankara this week, with the noteworthy visit of KSA Crown Prince MBS, the visits of UK FM and Defense Minister, as well as of the IL FM.***
* ***The government proposed 1 trillion lira extra budget to tackle rising costs***
* ***An AKP-sponsored bill envisages extending the tenure of the Chief of General Staff for another 5 years.***

**ASSESSMENT**

No movement to be noted in Ankara on the SE and FI NATO application, only a few days before the NATO summit in Madrid. this wThe visit of KSA crown-prince MBS has apparently not led to the signature of any economic or financial agreements between the two countries.

**DETAIL**

**EU-Turkey relations**

1. **EL**: President Erdogan lashed against EL emphasizing that TR would not host the High-Level Strategic Council Meeting mentioning, “*EL is on its own from now*”. Vice President Oktay stated, "*If disarmament of the islands in the Aegean is not done as soon as possible, we will question the sovereignty of the islands within the framework of international law and agreements*."
2. **SE and FI NATO applications**: FM Cavusoglu criticised the so-called “*lax attitude of SE laws and authorities*” in fighting terrorism. Presidential spokesperson Kalin and Deputy FM Onal participated in talks in Brussels on the NATO candidacies. Kalin mentioned that discussions will continue, but that the NATO summit in Madrid next week is not a deadline.

**Domestic Politics**

1. **The government proposed 1 trillion lira extra budget to tackle rising costs:** The government submitted a proposal to parliament for a supplementary budget of some 1 trillion lira ($57.74 billion) to cover rising costs of tackling a currency slide, soaring energy prices and rampant inflation. The supplementary budget bill is expected to be adopted through parliament before summer recess.
2. **AKP-sponsored bill envisages extending the tenure of the Chief of General Staff:** A bill submitted to parliament stipulates extending the age limit from 67 to 72 for the chief of general staff. For this reason, the sitting Chief of General Staff, who normally should retire next August, will be able to serve another five years.

**Judiciary and Fundamental Rights**

1. **Judiciary:** Pursuant to the decree issued by the first Chamber of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors, the duty stations of 5.426 judges and prosecutors and chief prosecutors of 33 provinces, have been changed. Bektaş, judge-member of Istanbul 13th Heavy Penal Court who had dissented the verdicts in the Gezi Case, has been transferred from Istanbul to far away provincial Tokat.
2. **Release of cadets on duty on 15 July:** The Court of Cassation has decided to release around 70 of the Kuleli Military High School cadets who were sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly participating in the 2016 coup attempt.  The sentences were criticised as being unlawful as the cadets were abiding orders of their superiors.
3. **Ill-treatment and torture - Allegations of use of excessive force in Başkale/Van/Serzul hamlet:** Soldiers have detained a citizen in Van by excessive force and by firing hundreds of live rounds into the air in a behaviour reminiscent of the practices of the 1990s and stirring huge public reaction. After the release of the video, the Van governorship published a statement, stating that the troops opened fire because relatives of the detained were throwing stones at the gendarmerie.
4. **Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT) Diyarbakır branch announced recent torture cases;** The HRFT Diyarbakır branch revealed that between January 1st and May 31st 2022, 137 people filed torture complaints in Diyarbakır, with the real number of cases estimated to be much higher.
5. **Violence against women - Pınar Gültekin case:** the 13th hearing of the murder case on university student Pınar Gültekin was held at the Muğla 3rd High Criminal Court. The court reduced the perpetrator’s aggravated life imprisonment to 23 years on the grounds of “*unjust provocation*”. The verdict led to public outcry and the victim’s family announced to lodge an appeal.
6. **LGBTIQ - Interventions and Bans on Pride Month Events**: The District Governors of Beyoğlu and Kadıköy in Istanbulbanned the main Pride March events, while the Istanbul governorate banned all Istanbul LGBTI+Pride Week events. The Istanbul University Equality Club picnic event, as part of the “LGBTI+ Pride Month”, was cancelled after ultra-religious groups gathered around the university campus. In contrast, authorities did not act against the lynching call of this group, Müdafaa-i İslam Hareketi (Defense of Islam Movement) that previously targeted other LGBTI+s events. The Governor of Gaziantep city tweeted on 18/06 not to grant permission to “*pervert*” [sic] events.
7. **Minorities:** The **Regulation on the election of minority foundations’ boards** which had been annulled in 2013 was finally published on 18/06. The new Regulation increases control and interference of the state on minority foundations at every stage of the election period. The condition “to be residing in the constituencies for a minimum of 6 months” for electors and the candidates for the management board is another big obstacle for the already dwindling minority populations.
8. **Hate crimes: Racist attitude by police against an African restaurant in Ankara;** The Saab restaurant belonging to a Somali-born Turkish citizen which serves Arabic and African meals in Ankara was subjected to police harassment at the opening ceremony. The owner was forced to change the (African Union) colours of his signboard after police intervention.
9. **Right to life – impunity - Diyarbakır JITEM/Musa Anter Case:** The case on the murder of writer Musa Anter in Diyarbakır in 1992 and the activities of JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Anti-Terror Unit) in Diyarbakır was held at Ankara Heavy Penal Court on 20/06. The case has been consolidated by the Court of Cassation in 2016. The court adjourned the trial to 15/09, which is two weeks before the case faces statute of limitations.
10. **Police Officer acquitted in Diyarbakır:** The final trial of the case against police officer K. B., for the killing of Mr. Recep Hantas was held at Diyarbakır Heavy Penal Court on 21/06. Hantaş was killed by police fire while he was collecting waste paper in Diyarbakır in April 2019. The indictment demanded 18 to 25 years in prison on charges of ‘*murder with probable intent*’. However, the court acquitted the defendant police officer.
11. **Cultural rights:** The state appointed trustee mayors continue changing original names of streets. Districts etc. The - Kıtılbil District of Sur in Diyarbakır, which has a history of approximately 400 years, was changed to "Fetih (conquest) District" without any consultation. The locals declared they would lodge an appeal to the court.
12. **Refugees:** The ECHR [**rule**](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-217815%22]}) on 21/06 in the Akkad vs. TR case stated that Turkey had unlawfully deported a Syrian refugee after forcing him to sign a document that said he was returning voluntarily to Syria. The Court found violations of prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, right to liberty and security, right to an effective remedy, and ordered Turkey to pay 12,250 Euros.
13. **The Prosecutor of the Council of State repeated his request for annulment of the Istanbul Convention's withdrawal decision:** The last of the lawsuits filed against President Erdogan's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention on 20/03/2021 was heard in the 10th Chamber of the Council of State on 23/06. A decision is expected before the judicial holiday.

**Disinformation**

1. **Reactions continue for the draft legislation known as "disinformation law":** Opposition parties announced their opposition to the draft Disinformation law, with CHP ChairKılıçdaroğlu stating that the party might take the law to the Consitutional Court. Some news items claimed that the bill divided the governing coalition into two. Cyber law experts warn for a climate of fear in a new dimension. Journalism Unions gathered in Ankara and İstanbul to protest and demand the withdrawal of the bill.
2. **Forest Fires:** Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun called upon the public to disregard any social media “*disinformation*” content regarding the fire in the forest area in Marmaris. He stated that a technical investigation is conducted on the posts that caused “information pollution”. According to the General Directorate of Security 60% of the implied accounts were bot accounts, of which allegedly 21% are affiliated to FETO and 16% to the PKK.

**Foreign policy**

1. **KSA:** The Saudi Crown Prince Salman (MBS) paid an official visit to Turkey on 22/06. Eight Ministers and a number of businesspersons accompanied him. President Erdogan and MBS held a tête-à-tête meeting to discuss the possibility of developing and diversifying mutual trade, explore investment opportunities and concrete partnerships. They also discussed possible cooperation in the energy field and agreed to activate the Saudi-Turkish Coordination Council, to increase the level of cooperation and coordination in areas of common interest. The two sides issued a joint declaration where they emphasized their countries’ determination to start a new era of comprehensive cooperation in many areas and deepen their cooperation for the stability and peace in the region. No agreements were signed during this visit between the two countries. In the margins of the visit, TR Treasury and Finance Minister Nebati met with the Saudi Minister of Trade and Information Al Qasabi and the Minister of Investment Al Falih and agreed to increase communication for the facilitation of bilateral trade, sustainable development and evaluation of investment opportunities. The visit was criticised by the opposition and in particular CHP leader Kilicdaroglu who reminded about the past statements of the government towards Saudi Arabia, in particular in the context of the murder on Khashoggi.
2. **IL:** IL FM Lapid met his TR counterpart in Ankara. TR FM Cavusoglu stated that both countries are launching the process to raise the diplomatic relations again to the level of Ambassador, with FM Lapid expressing his hope that the process can be completed soon. TR is in close contact with Israel on threats to Israeli citizens in the country and it will not allow any terrorist attacks on its territory. Il FM Lapid added that TR intelligence recently foiled an Iranian attack in Istanbul against IL citizens and these efforts are ongoing.In a phone call, the Israeli president thanked his Turkish counterpart for Ankara’s efforts in combatting terrorism**.** TR FM Cavusoglu also spoke on the phone with Iranian FM Abdullahiyan.
3. **UA-RU:** President Erdogan held separate discussions over the phone this week with UK PM Johnson and UN Secretary-General Guterres on efforts to ensure exports of UA grain via the Black Sea.

A TR military delegation held talks with RU counterparts on 21 June, which TR MoD Akar evaluated as “*productive and constructive*”. The Delegations agreed to continue consultations on safe vessel departures and grain export from UA ports. After the meeting, Russia allowed a Turkish cargo ship to leave the by RU occupied port of Mariupol.

TR FM Cavusoglu claim that a four-way meeting between Russia, Ukraine, TR and UN could be held soon in Istanbul to address the issue of the grain corridor. TR aims to establish as a result of this possible meeting a “*control centre*” to monitor shipping. On allegations of grain stolen from Ukraine, Cavusoglu mentioned, “*TR investigated the country of origin of all the products and they were labelled Russian*”. He added that “*TR is against the illegal buying and selling of Ukrainian grain by any country, including but not limited to Russia”* and that such grain will not be allowed to entry.

Turkish Defense Industry President Demir mentioned in an interview that TR is now “*more careful*” about selling weapons to Ukraine. As motivation, he gives that “*TR has to be able to speak to both sides*”. A RU-made UAV crashed in the TR mountainous region of Gumushane in northeast Turkey. It is unclear whether the UAV came from UA or SY.

1. **UK:** UK Minister of Defence Wallace visited Ankara to meet TR MoD Akar to discuss regional defence issues, possible defence industry cooperation and the continuation of military training cooperation activities. Akar stressed the momentum for defence industry cooperation with the UK lifting of export license restrictions against TR. UK Foreign Secretary Truss met TR FM Cavusoglu to discuss bilateral ties and current regional and international issues. Truss hailed TR’s “*leading role*” in efforts to open a grain export corridor from UA.
2. **Libya:** TR’s Parliament approved a presidential motion to extend troop deployment in Libya for another 18 months as of July 2. For the first time, opposition party IYI supported the motion.
3. **SY**: TR forces mediated in severe clashes between different factions of the opposition Syrian National Army in Euphrates Shield Area and Afrin. TR security forces killed high-ranking member of the Syrian Autonomous Administration, Huseyin Sibli, in an attack in northern Iraq.
4. **Balkans:** FM Cavusoglu went on a Balkan tour visiting Serbia, North Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo between 15-19 June. He discussed bilateral issues and current regional and international development with focus on BiH. Cavusoglu also attended the 2nd Prespa Dialogue Forum that took place in North Macedonia on 16 June.
5. In Serbia, Cavusoglu met with his counterpart Selakovic and exchanged views on the situation in BiH as well as on the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. He also met with President Vucic and PM Brnabic and discussed bilateral relations and regionals issues. Cavusoglu held a meeting with Serbia’s National Assembly Speaker and emphasized on the necessity to strengthen bilateral legislative ties. President Erdogan will likely pay an official visit to Serbia in the coming weeks.
6. During his visit to BiH, Cavusoglu met with his Bosnian counterpart Tukovic and at the joint press conference, he stated that TR will not allow a new conflict in BiH and called to all parties to act responsibly. He communicated President’s Erdogan desire to hold a trilateral Summit between TR-BiH and SR at a relevant time and advocated in favor of a quadrilateral meeting between the leaders of CR-TR-SR-BiH proposed earlier by Dodik. Cavusoglu met also with OHR Schmidt and reiterated TR’s support to the important role the office plays for the peace and stability in BiH.
7. In Kosovo*,* Cavusoglu met with the Kosovar President Osmani and discussed cooperation in foreign policy, defence, trade, and other fields, as well as current developments in the region and Europe. He also met with Deputy PM and Minister of FA Schwartz. Cavusoglu emphasized that the only issue hampering the bilateral relations between the two countries is the continuous presence of “FETO” in Kosovo.
8. **US:** The Presidential spokesperson Kalin had a telephone call with US National Security Adviser Sullivan and discussed bilateral political and economic relations. Among the topics discussed was TR’s contribution and role in NATO, as well as the upcoming Madrid Summit and the new Strategic Concept as well as Sweden and Finland's bids. The two also discussed the grain shipments via the Black Sea, food crisis, counterterrorism and other security and regional issues.
9. **Pakistan:** MoI Soylu held a phone call with his Pakistani counterpart Khan and discussed their cooperation in the field of migration management and cooperation activities and opportunities in the field of security with emphasis in the fields of fight against terrorism, cross border organised crime and cybercrime.

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